

# **EXHIBIT H**

# ***Species at Risk Act*** Guidelines

## Range Plan Guidance for Woodland Caribou, Boreal Population



2016



Environment and  
Climate Change Canada

Environnement et  
Changement climatique Canada

Canada

SARA requires that critical habitat on federal land be legally protected. Legal protection can be achieved through: (1) provisions in, or measures under, SARA or another Act of Parliament, which would be reflected in a protection statement posted on the Species at Risk Public Registry that outlines how the critical habitat or portions of it are legally protected; or (2) a protection order made by the Minister bringing the s.58 prohibition directly into force in specified areas.

Environment and Climate Change Canada will look to provincial/territorial jurisdictions to provide protection for boreal caribou critical habitat on non-federal lands. If the Minister of Environment and Climate Change is of the opinion, after consultation with the appropriate provincial or territorial minister, that any portion of critical habitat is unprotected, the Minister must make a recommendation to the Governor in Council (GIC) for a protection order (i.e. a s. 61 order). GIC decides whether or not to make the order based upon broader considerations, including socio-economics. As long as reasonable steps to put protection in place are actively underway, the Minister will defer making a recommendation for an order to GIC. In this latter situation, progress reports on the steps being taken to protect the critical habitat must be included in the Species at Risk Public Registry with respect to every 180 day period until it is protected or no longer identified as critical habitat.

### **III. Boreal caribou recovery and the need for range-specific approaches**

Boreal caribou are listed as Threatened under Schedule 1 of SARA. The final recovery strategy for boreal caribou was posted on the Species at Risk Public Registry on October 5, 2012. Success in the recovery of boreal caribou depends on the commitment, collaboration, and cooperation of many different constituencies that will be involved in implementing the broad strategies and general approaches set out in the recovery strategy and will not be achieved by Environment and Climate Change Canada, or any other jurisdiction, alone.

Boreal caribou require large areas comprised of continuous tracts of undisturbed habitat rich in mature to old-growth coniferous forest, lichens, muskegs, peat lands, and upland or hilly areas.

The recovery goal for boreal caribou is to achieve self-sustaining local populations in all boreal caribou ranges throughout their current distribution in Canada, to the extent possible. To guide recovery efforts, the population and distribution objectives for boreal caribou across their distribution in Canada are, to the extent possible, to:

- Maintain the current status of the 14 existing self-sustaining local populations; and,
- Stabilize and achieve self-sustaining status for the 37 not self-sustaining local populations.

The critical habitat necessary to achieve the population and distribution objectives for the recovery and survival of boreal caribou is identified for all boreal caribou ranges, except for northern Saskatchewan's Boreal Shield range (SK1). Critical habitat for boreal caribou is identified as:

- i) the area within the boundary of each boreal caribou range that provides an overall ecological condition that will allow for an ongoing recruitment and retirement cycle of habitat, which maintains a perpetual state of a minimum of 65% of the area as undisturbed habitat; and
- ii) biophysical attributes required by boreal caribou to carry out life processes.

The recovery strategy identifies 65% undisturbed habitat in a range as the disturbance management threshold, which provides a measurable probability (60%) for a local population to be self-sustaining. This threshold is considered a minimum threshold because at 65% undisturbed habitat there remains a significant risk (40%) that local populations will not be self-sustaining.

The recovery of boreal caribou requires actions that will vary according to both the habitat and population conditions within each boreal caribou range. The recovery strategy provides broad strategies and general approaches to achieve the population and distribution objectives, which will assist in the development of range plans and action plans.

As the range has been identified as the most relevant scale at which to plan for the conservation of boreal caribou, undertaking landscape level land and/or natural resource planning is appropriate for effective management of cumulative effects of habitat disturbance within boreal caribou ranges and for managing disturbance over time to ensure sufficient habitat is available for boreal caribou.

Given the dynamic nature of boreal caribou habitat requirements, the landscape scale at which those requirements operate, and the highly variable present-day land management and ecological conditions that exist among all boreal caribou ranges, range-specific approaches to protecting critical habitat, and in many cases improving the condition of critical habitat for this species, are needed. Both federal and non-federal lands need to be addressed in an integrated manner in range-wide plan. The development of range plans will address the need for range-specific approaches.

In light of jurisdictional responsibilities for land and natural resource management, it is expected that provinces and territories will develop range plans. In areas where the responsibility for land and natural resource management varies, range plans will be developed collaboratively between all responsible authorities. Range plans may be stand-alone documents, or part of other planning documents including action plans. Range plans could inform and be informed by broader land-use planning and decision making. The recovery strategy calls for range plans to be completed within three to five years of the posting of the final recovery strategy (i.e. by October 5, 2017).